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THE MARQUESAN LANGUAGE

The language spoken by the Marquesas Islanders is one of the group of related tongues spoken throughout the Polynesian islands, generally called Polynesian. Within the small area of their isolated home, these islanders differentiated their speech into several dialects having distinctive phonetic and tonal traits and variations in vocabulary; but, in comparison with the divergence of Marquesan from other Polynesian languages, these local variations are of minor importance. Marquesan differs from other Polynesian languages so much that the latter are only vaguely comprehensible to an intelligent Marquesan. But, as it is in each of the other main groups of islands in Polynesia, the Marquesan's language, like his culture, was unified throughout the group, so that the speech of a man of any island in the group was plainly understood by one from any other. It is obvious to the student travelling in the islands that local differences are but divergencies from a common original. There is little reason to believe that local variations have resulted from influences or accretions coming from outside the islands.

The notes which follow are based on a careful, though not very extensive, study of the phonetics of the dialect of the Marquesas. The grammar and syntax of the language is sufficiently well outlined in the dictionary of Dordillon. For this reason little attention was paid to these subjects other than that required for personal use of the language. No sooner had I reached the islands, however, than I realized that the orthography adopted by Dordillon was totally inadequate for indicating the phonetics of the dialect. In conjunction with the other investigations a short but careful study of the phonetics and vocalization was therefore made in the following way: A list of words covering all the possible combinations of consonants and vowels in the local dialect was made, and various informants in different sections of the group were tested out with these words. The summary of the results of this study as given in the following pages has been published in this collection in the hope that it may contain information directly contributory to the study of the cultural and linguistic affiliations of the islanders.

Phonetics

The ten consonants (*f*, *g*, *h*, *k*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *r*, *t*, and *v*) and the five vowels (*a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*) used by Dordillon are by no means sufficient to cover the phonetics of the dialect of the Marquesas. Dordillon speaks of some variations in the vowel sounds, but there are more and greater variations than he indicates.

The following list shows the consonant and vowel variation in the northern and southern sections—called by Dordillon northwestern and southeastern sections of the group (compare Dordillon, pp. 86-89).

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Northern	*becomes*	*Southern*
a	sometimes	*e*
i	in one word	*e*
u	in some words	*o*
h		*f*
k		*'*
k		*'*
m	in some words	*n*
m	in some words	*p*
n	in some words	*t*
p	in some words	*t*
t	in some words	*n*
v	in some words	*'*
'	in some words	*t* or *k*

In the consonant changes the most common are the replacement of *h*, *n*, *t*, *k* of the northern dialect respectively by *f*, *n*, *t* and the catch or glottal stop (') in the southern islands.

Of the consonant sounds the *f* of the southern section and its variant *h* of the northern offer no difficulty. Another sound—common to both sections—for which Dordillon uses *h*, needs more analysis. (See p. .....) The letters *f*, *h*, *k*, *m*, *p*, *t*, and *v* are simply pronounced as in English. The *r* has been for the most part dropped, an *n* being sometimes substituted. Such *r*'s as are retained are pronounced simply as in English by some natives, but by others they are given a roll on the end of the tongue, sometimes slight, sometimes greatly exaggerated. The roll is especially marked when there are several *r*'s in a word. For example in the word, *pĕrĕre* (stretched), the *r*'s are always rolled; the word *pārara* (shattered) sounds like *pārrrrra*.

A most interesting variation of consonant sound is that in which *n*, *ng*, and *k* replace each other in different sections of the island group. For example, the words *iuna* (upon), *mako* (shark), and *puaina* (ear) are pronounced as here spelled, in Hivaoa, Tahuata, and Fatuhiva. On the eastern half of Nukuhiva, including the valleys along the coast from Taipi Vai to Hatiheu—the valleys comprising the eastern of the two divisions of the island that were continually opposed in war—these words are pronounced *iunga*, *mango*, *puainga*, and the same consonant sound of *ng* appears in all words of this class. (The *ng* is hard, at the base of the nose, and should perhaps be spelt *ngk*). These three words, on the western half of Nukuhiva and on Uapou, are pronounced *iuka*, *mako*, and *puaika*. The *ngk* used in a region which is geographically midway between the eastern and western extremes of the island group forms a link between the *n* and the *k*. Uahuka seems to belong to the *n* group, though it is difficult to be certain as there has been much immigration into this island from Nukuhiva, Uapou, and Hivaoa.

In a study of the words in which *h* is common throughout the whole

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group, complications arise. In combination with different vowels there is a variation from a simple *h* sound to a distinct German *ch*, through *sch* to *s*, with a *w* sound often included. In the following examples, capitals indicate that the sounds represented by these letters are subdued, though distinct. The variant *h* sounds are never given quite the full force that they have in English or in German.

Dordillon spelling	Phonetic spelling
ĭha (ejaculation)	ICHYá'
ĭhea (where?)	iCHyĕ'ya, iSCHĕ'ya
ĭhi (a kind of nut)	ĭhí, iCHí, iSCHí
ĭho (descend)	iCHYó', ĭhyó
ĭhu (nose)	iCHYú, ĭhyú
nohea (whence?)	nohĕ'ya, noCHĕ'ya, nochĕ'ya
puha (thigh)	púCHa, púha
pŭho (shrine)	pucho
o ai ha'i (who knows?)	o waI sHŏ'i, o waI sŏ'i
? (expression of disgust)	TSCHIAĔ
? (expression of exasperation)	asche
nuhe (dog)	nū'chwĕ, nū'CHWĕ
ohia (when)	oCHwhĭ'ya
tiohi (to see)	tióCHWi
tihe (arrive)	tĭhye

It is obvious that the sound content of Marquesan is richer than is indicated by the redaction of the language by its earliest students, who, being missionaries, were interested rather in simplifying writing than in accurate phonetic records.

Other examples of these *s*, *ch*, *w*, and *y* sounds that seem to grow out of the *h* could be given, but this will suffice. The examples given above show that there is an *hy* sound between *i* and *o*, and *i* and *u*; an *s* or *sh* sound between *o* and *i*; an *sch* sound between *i* and *e*, and *i* and *i*; a *ch* sound between *i* and *i*, *o* and *e*, *u* and *a*; a *chw* sound between *u* and *e*; a *chy* sound between *i* and *a*, *i* and *e*, *i* and *o*. In many other combinations with vowels *h* has a simple *h* sound: *tahá, tahĕ', áhi, aho, ahu, ehá'á, ehĕ''ĕ, ĕhi, ehū'eva, poha, nŏhŏ, pohú'ĕ, púhĭ', púhuhu.*

The sounds of consonants and of vowels used singly are shown in Table 1. In this table capitals are used for sounds which are distinct, though not full in force; the accent (') is used to mark the syllable bearing the main stress in words of more than one syllable; prolonged sounding of a letter is indicated by a macron (as ā); the apostrophe (') indicates a glottal catch between vowels, marking the place of a consonant that has been dropped, or, at the end of a word, a vowel sound cut short with a catch of the breath. Dordillon's accents are very confusing as they sometimes indicate a stress and sometimes a catch between the vowel marked with an accent and the preceding vowel.

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TABLE 1.—SOUNDS OF CONSONANTS AND VOWELS

Dordillon orthography	Orthography adopted here	Sounds represented	Examples	Dordillon spelling
f	*f*	as *f* in English *for*	*fanáU* (to give birth)	*fanau*
h	*h*	*h*; *hy*; *ch* as in German *ach*; *CH*; *CHy*; *CHY*; *sch*; *SCH*; *sH*; *s*; *chw*; *CHW*	(See discussion above)	
k	*k*	as *k* in English *keep*	*kété* (basket)	*kete*
m	*m*	as *m* in English *man*	*mél* (breadfruit)	*mei*
n	*n*	as *n* in English *nest*	*no* (oī)	*no*
p	*p*	as *p* in English *path*	*po* (night)	*po*
r	*r*	as *r* in English *rat* or with a slight to exaggerated roll, *rrrr*	*rérré* (to flee)	*rere*
t	*t*	as *t* in English *tan*	*te* (the)	*te*
v	*v*	as *v* in English *vat*	*vóhi* (place)	*vohi*
ng	*ngk*	as *ngk* sound at the base of the nose	*móngko* (shark)	*mako*
a	*a*	as *a* in English *father*	*máno* (branch)	*mano*
	á	like the above, but sustained	*má'na* (power)	*mana*
e	*e*	as *ay* in English *play*	*te* (the)	*te*
	é	as *e* in English *yet*	*véhiyé* (firewood)	*vehie*
i	*i*	as *i* in English *pique*	*pi* (full)	*pi*
o	*o*	as *ow* in English *flow*	*po* (night)	*po*
	ó	as *ou* in English *taut*	*nóhó* (to sit)	*noho*
u	*u*	as *oo* in English *too*	*tu* (erect)	*tu*

Table 1 is sufficient to indicate the vowel sounds in this dialect of the Polynesian language; further discussion seems unnecessary. Sound modifications resulting in juxtaposition of vowels, need, however, some exposition. These are illustrated in Table 2. Vowels separated by a glottal stop (') are not to be regarded as in juxtaposition since the stop, replacing a consonant, makes the vowels as distinct as though the consonant were retained.

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TABLE 2. SOUNDS OF VOWELS IN JUXTAPOSITION

Vowels in juxtaposition.	When the stress falls on:	The combined sound is	As in the word:	Dordillon orthography
a e	*a*	*áE*	*váEváE* (leg)	*vaevae*
a e	*e*	*aé*	*paémo* (to interrupt)	*paemo*
a i	*a*	*ái*	*háihái* (food)	*haihai*
a i	*i*	*aí*	*faínu* (potion)	*fainu*
a o	*a*	*áO*	*háOháO* (side)	*haohao*
a o	*o*	*aó*	*taóte* (doctor)	*taote*
a u	*a*	*áU*	*háUháU* (to bathe)	*hauhau*
a u	*u*	*aú*	*maúna* (on top of)	*mauna*
e a	*e*	*ẏa*	*mahéya* (which way?)	*mahea*
e a	*a*	*eẎá*	*eẎáha* (what?)	*e aha*
e i	*e*	*éi*	*héi* (necklace)	*hei*
e i	*i*	*ei*	*teína* (younger brother)	*teina*
e o	*e*	*ẏo*	*néyo* (mad)	*neo*
e o	*o*	*eẎó*	*neẎóhe* (spine)	*neohe*
e u	*e*	*ẏu*	*héyu* (play)	*heu*
e u	*u*	*eẎú*	*neẎúnẽ* (move)	*neune*
i a	*i*	*ĩya*	*ĩ'yãya* (to him)	*iaia*
i a	*a*	*iẎá*	*hiẎápo* (banyan)	*hiapo*
i e	*i*	*ĩye*	*vãhĩyẽ* (firewood)	*vahie*
i e	*e*	*iẎé*	*piẎéi* (dried)	*piei*
i o	*i*	*ĩyo*	*ĩyo* (to the house of)	*io*
i o	*o*	*iẎó*	*iẎóto* (inside)	*i óto*
i u	*i*	*ĩyu*	*tĩyu* (north wind)	*tiu*
i u	*u*	*iẎú*	*iẎúna* (upon)	*i úna*
o a	*o*	*ówa*	*hówa hówa* (content)	*hoaoa*
o a	*a*	*oẆá*	*hoẆána* (to be able)	*hoana*
o e	*o*	*ówẽ*	*tówẽ tówẽ* (crab)	*toetoe*
o e	*e*	*owé*	*howéhi* (a food)	*hoehi*
o i	*o*	*óẆĩ,*	*hóẆĩ* (fast)	*hoi*
ō i	*ō*	*ō'ĩ*	*popōĩ* (a food)	*popoi*
o i	*i*	*owĩ*	*ow'ĩya* (here is)	*ó ia*
o u	*o*	*óU*	*hóU* (new)	*hou*
o u	*u*	*oú*	*toúfa* (forty)	*toufa*
u a	*u*	*úwa*	*túwa* (back)	*tua*
u a	*a*	*uwá*	*uwá uwá*—almost *twá twá* (pulse)	*uaua*
u e	*u*	*uwẽ*	*uẽúwẽ* (move)	*uaue*
u e	*e*	*Uwé*	*Uwẽ Uwẽ*—almost *wẽ wẽ* (to weep)	*uaue*
u i	*u*	*úwi*	*kúwi* (mother)	*kui*
u i	*i*	*uwĩ*	*tuwĩya* (fiance)	*tuia*
u o	*u*	*úẆo*	*núẆo* (knee)	*nuo*
u o	*o*	*uwó*	*óUwóho* (hair)	*ouoho*

In summary, it may be pointed out that *a* stressed tends to absorb a following *e*, *i*, *o*, or *u*, and that *e* stressed tends to absorb a following *i*.

The absorbed vowel is pronounced farther forward in the mouth, relatively to the second vowel. A *y* occurs in *ẏa*, *ẏyo*, *ẏyu*, *ĩya*, *ĩye*, *ĩyo*, *ĩyu*: in other words, when *e* (preceding any vowel except *i*) bears the stress; and when *i* (preceding all other vowels) bears the stress. A *Y* occurs in *eẎá*,

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194 *eÝó, eÝú, iÝó, iÝé, iÝó, iÝú*: in other words, when any other vowel except *i* follows *e* and bears the stress; or when any other vowel follows *i* and bears the stress. A *w* occurs in *ówu, ówe, owí, úwo, wú, úwe, Uwé, úwi, wú, wwé*: in other words, with *o* bearing stress before *a* and *e*, and with *o* before *i* when the latter is stressed; and with *u* stressed or unstressed with all other vowels. *ó* stressed, followed by *i* forms *óy*. A *W* occurs in *oWó, oWé, óWi, úWo*.

To sum up: When *a* is stressed, it forms a near-dipthong with all other vowels by predominating and making of the second vowel a mere shading of sound; *e* stressed does the same thing with *i*. *E* stressed with all vowels except *i*, and *i* stressed with all vowels except another *i* modify the following vowel with a distinct *y* sound. When the second vowel is stressed, its modification by the preceding *e* is much less noticeable, as indicated by the *Y*. *O* and *u* stressed and unstressed, which modify the vowels *a*, *e*, and *i* with a *w* or *W* sound; and *u* similarly modifies a following *o*. In this inclusion of a *w* sound, however, the extent of modification does not seem to follow in the orderly fashion of the *e*'s and *i*'s the stressing of the first or second vowel.

LEGEND OF MAHUIKE RECORDED PHONETICALLY

5339 7713 The short legend of Mahuike was recited at Atuona, Hivaoa, by Haapuani, who was born in that valley. It was recorded phonetically, exactly as heard, using the conventions described above. A free translation of this legend and the phonetic record are as follows:

Fire in the Marquesas originally came from Mahuike. It is said that formerly there was no fire here, Mahuike having it all. Maui was the great-grandson of Mahuike. In those times the people became disgusted with eating things raw. A rumor spread among them that the food that Mahuike ate in his country was very fine in comparison with what was eaten raw here. How different it was with the chief Mahuike! There was a wise man (*tuhuna*) here who bethought him of the native stories that were told of the delicious food that Mahuike enjoyed. The wise man conceived an idea. The story had it that Mahuike's food was particularly good. Some one asked in what way it was better. "We have breadfruit, banana, breadfruit-paste just like what they have." "This is the difference," said the wise man, "Mahuike's food is prepared with fire." Then the people said to Maui, "What a fine thing it would be if you would go to your great-grandfather Mahuike and get fire for us." Maui was told what to say:

O Mahuike!
Give me some fire. (Chanted).

When Maui approached his great-grandfather with these words, the old man asked, "Who told you Mahuike had fire?" "Why," said Maui. "A report came to us that your food was good, and not indigestible like ours, because you had fire". Mahuike said, "Give me your fire-lighter so that I may give you some fire". "Here it is," said Maui, and unwrapped it from the tail of his loin cloth. Mahuike ignited it from the sole of his foot and gave it back to Maui, saying, "There is some fire for you, my great-grandson". Maui set off along the road. He rubbed the end of the fire-lighter on the ground and put out the fire, then returned to Mahuike, approaching him with the same words as before. The old man demanded, "What put out your fire?" Maui